



Women managers and hierarchical structures in working life

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Introduction

The most important change in European labour markets in the last three or four decades has probably been the massive incorporation of women into the labour force. Women also started to occupy previously male-dominated managerial roles, though somewhat more slowly. But even though it is not an exception any more for a woman to be a boss, the proportion of female managers remains below their proportion in the overall workforce, especially for high-level managerial positions. And despite the fact that women are increasingly present in managerial roles, there is quite a lot of evidence that traditional stereotypes are still prevalent.

In managerial literature and managerial circles, the characteristics associated with a successful leader (self-assurance, competitiveness, results-driven action, aggressiveness) are typically those of a stereotypical 'alpha male' (see, for example, Ludeman and Erlandson, 2006). Persistent stereotyping of leadership positions seems to still reflect the traditional division of labour, where men are occupied in the public sphere and women hold power within the private sphere of home and family. In the 1990s, male managers and male students of management were still inclined to consider men more likely than women to possess the characteristics, attitudes and temperaments required of successful managers, whereas female students of management had increasingly abandoned such gender stereotypes regarding managerial positions (Schein, 2007, pp. 7–9). In some respects, women's labour market participation may not have challenged these stereotypes because of the gender segregation of sectors and occupations, which may actually reinforce stereotypes. For example, women remain concentrated in caring jobs and part-time positions. On the other hand, men have continued to participate in full-time paid labour and have retained the lion's share of leadership roles (e.g. Diekmann and Goodfriend, 2006, p. 370).

Slowly changing social roles and stereotypes may lead to changes in power relations. A study by Diekmann et al. (2004) conducted with university students in the United States showed that both women and men perceive that women have gained occupational, economic, political, relational and individual power in the past 50 years, and that they are expected to continue to do so in the future. Nonetheless, the participants also believed that men will prevail in structural forms of power, leading to the conclusion that even if the gender hierarchy is not immutable, it will not disappear entirely within the lifetime of the students participating in the study (Diekmann et al., 2004.) A study from Cejka and Eagly (1999) reached similar conclusions: in the current social structure, high wages and prestige are associated with occupations that are thought to have masculine characteristics, and this gender congruence tends to foster sex segregation.

To better understand the progress women have made thus far in the European Union (we believe that knowledge can be an important element in fostering equality between the sexes), we will analyse the current situation and the obstacles women face on the way to the top in more detail. We will first examine what the literature tells us about the careers of female managers; then we will review the existing European data on women in managerial positions in the EU, using information from the European Working Conditions Surveys; and finally, we will try to explore the potential impact of the gender of the superior on the conditions of work.

1

Barriers to women attaining management positions

There is clear evidence of a gender gap in high-level positions all around the world. According to statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO), women's share of managerial jobs ranged between 20 and 40% in 48 countries in 2000–2002. Women are underrepresented in managerial jobs compared to their share of overall employment. Also, when climbing up an organisation's hierarchy, the proportion of women managers diminishes sharply. Billing and Alvesson (2000, p. 145) specify that women are outnumbered by men in positions of formal power and authority, high status and high incomes. They state that men have a near monopoly on the most senior positions and they are overrepresented in middle-level managerial jobs globally.

Explanations for the small numbers of women in management depend on the viewpoint from which the situation of working women is looked at. Billing and Alvesson (2000, p. 145) distinguish three general approaches to the issue. The first view emphasises observable differences between men and women, focusing on themes such as early socialisation processes and the development of different behaviours or traits in childhood and if this results in gendered leadership styles (Collins and Singh, 2006, p. 11). According to Powell (1990, p. 69), studies concentrating on the differences have mostly examined behaviour, motivation, commitment and subordinate responses of male and female leaders.

The second approach sees men and women as fundamentally alike and gives sociological and structural explanations, highlighting, for example, positions in organisations, organisational policies, interests and biases in evaluation (Billing and Alvesson, 2000, p. 145). Citing previous studies, Collins and Singh conclude that the 'organisational barrier approach' often employs the 'glass ceiling' as a metaphor for the hurdles working women face (2006, pp. 11–12). The barriers are built on biased or gendered stereotypes that prevent women from attaining senior positions.

The third angle considers the cultural context and concentrates on how identity or subjectivity is formed by cultural forces operating on the individual and how the individual, in turn, is constructing the culture (meaning that the individual can change the cultural meanings of gender and leadership) (Billing and Alvesson, 2000, p. 145).

Collins and Singh (2006, p. 17) give emphasis on organisational culture; they state that despite the fact that legislation to improve gender equality was introduced in Britain 30 years ago, women do not seem to have equal access to leadership positions. They explain this by the prevalence of a generalised masculine culture and gendered perceptions of what it is to be a 'successful' leader/manager. In other words, workplace discrimination is maintained by institutionalised systems based on subjective assessments of leadership capability. This at least partly explains the slow pace of the progress women have made in the past decades. Cultural changes take time.

Meanwhile, women have to find ways to fit into the so-called 'masculine culture' at the highest levels of hierarchy. Many authors state that since leadership behaviour has been labelled as more characteristic of men, women experience a double bind. They are not respected as managers if they do not adapt to 'male leadership behaviour', while if they do, gender-inconsistent behaviour is usually evaluated negatively (e.g. Claes, 1999, p. 439; Eagly, 2007, p. 4; Kawakami et al., 2000, pp. 50–51). There are also concrete consequences for 'out of role behaviour'. Heilman (2001) argues that negative perceptions of women who prove to be competent in areas that are traditionally off limits to them can lead to discrimination, such as devaluation of their performance, denying of credit to them for their success and penalising them for their proven competence.

The above described lack of person–job fit comes from perceived incongruity between stereotypically based attributes ascribed to women and the attributes ascribed to men, as the latter are believed to be necessary for a manager. Gender stereotyping of the managerial position can take two distinct forms. Jobs can be gender stereotyped as male or female, either based on job responsibilities that are believed to be gender linked, or secondly, based on the sex of the usual

job-holder. Research findings indicate that male and female managers' performance evaluations are affected by the combination of the manager's gender and the type of position he or she has. Thus, the gender stereotype of a specific job should also be taken into account, rather than assuming that all managerial positions are perceived as equally male gender stereotyped (Lyness and Heilman, 2006).

Lyness and Thompson (2006, pp. 87–88) have a more concrete approach to the problematic situation of working women who want to have a career. They give a list of structural barriers female executives are likely to encounter, such as a male-dominated culture, men highlighting cultural boundaries between men and women, lack of mentoring, dependence on formal career management processes, stereotypical perceptions and difficulty in obtaining opportunities for geographic mobility. The authors specify that the barriers reflect interactions between men and women at the upper organisational level, where gender ratios are particularly skewed.

Eagly and Carli (2007) criticise the commonly used metaphor of a glass ceiling because it does not give a full picture of the complexity and variety of challenges that women face on their way to the top. They say that women are confronted with challenges at every step of the way, not only when they are about to take the step from middle management to seniority. Eagly and Carli describe the path as a labyrinth where the way may be closed by, for example, prejudices, sex stereotypes, issues of a right leadership style, demands of family life and underinvestment in social capital.

2 Situation of women managers in Europe

To understand what the labyrinth involves for working women in Europe, the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey 2005 (4th EWCS) provides empirical evidence. This survey gives a wealth of information on the conditions of work and employment in 31 European countries. The EWCS is based in a multi-stage stratified random sample, representative of the EU working population (Eurofound, 2007). For the purposes of this report, we will use a sub-sample including only employees working in establishments with at least two employees and we limit the description to workers in EU27 countries; this accounts for more than 21,200 cases.

The data on female managers in the European countries can be looked at from two perspectives. On the one hand, we will describe those women who state that they have a supervisory position, while on the other hand, we will also look at it from the other angle, using information on the employees who say they have a female boss. The 4th EWCS allows this two-pronged approach, since the respondents are asked both if they are in a supervisory position and if they have a female or male boss.

The two approaches complement each other, as the descriptive analysis of women managers and subordinates of female bosses interact with each other. The relationship also reflects the gendered division of labour in the European Union. Just to give one example, women managers tend to work in health and education sectors and their subordinates tend to be women. To obtain the full picture, we will first describe female managers themselves and then turn our attention to the characteristics of the subordinates of female bosses, i.e. those that indicate in the survey that ‘their immediate boss’ is a woman.

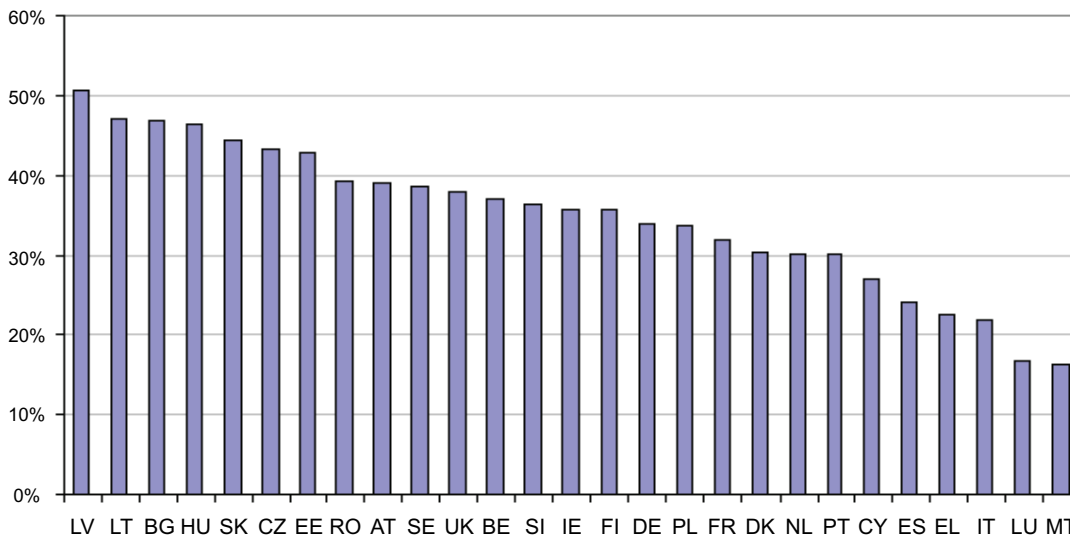
Female managers

In Europe, 33% of managers were women in 2005. The figure describes the proportion of women among the employees who state that they have people working directly under their supervision. Numbers drawn from the survey are in line with the statistics provided by the ILO (2004) stating that in the period 2000 to 2002, the proportion of women in managerial jobs was 20% to 40% in 48 countries.

Still, the numbers are worth looking at in more detail, since there are very large differences in the incidence of women managers according to country (Figure 1). In Latvia, gender equality, as measured by the number of female bosses, seems to have been reached, as the proportion of women managers is 51%. Other Eastern European countries are also close to achieving gender equality in respect of numbers of women managers, with the proportions above 40% in most of the Eastern European countries.

In Continental Europe and Scandinavia, the proportions of women managers are close to the EU average, with percentages around 30% to 40%. In Southern Europe, the share of female bosses is modest. For example, in Malta, only 16% of bosses are women. Luxembourg has a place among the Southern European countries as regards the proportion of female managers, where only 17% of bosses are women.

Figure 1: *Women managers by country*

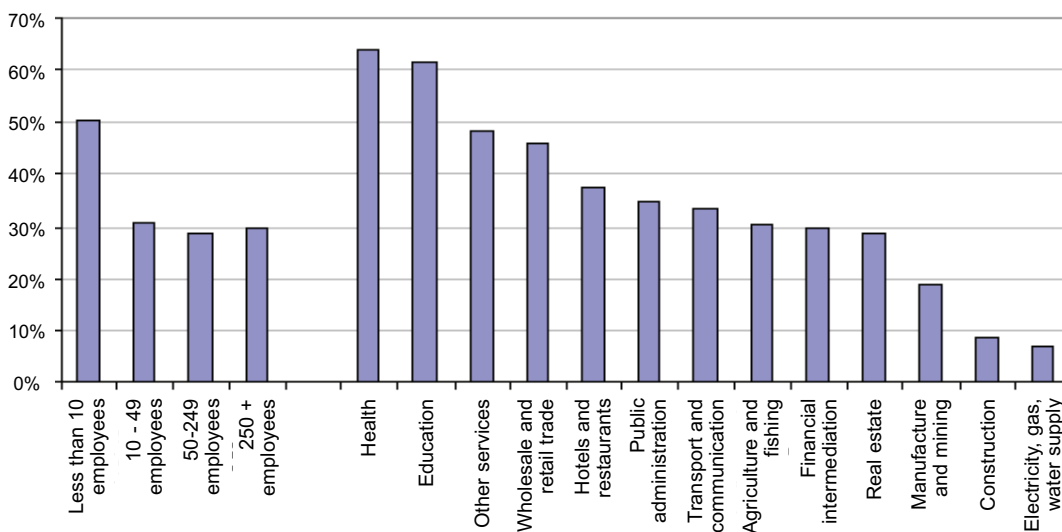


Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

As was suggested before, women managers are concentrated in certain types of establishments and sectors, thereby highlighting the gendered division of labour (Figure 2). In micro enterprises, where the number of employees is fewer than 10, the share of male and female managers is equal: half of the managers in micro enterprises are women. However, in bigger establishments, the share of women in supervisory roles is around 30%.

Gender segregation in the labour market is quite clear as far as managerial positions are concerned. Women managers are overrepresented in the health and education sectors, where the shares of women top are over 60%. Female managers are also often found in other services and wholesale and retail trade sectors, as over 40% of managers working there are women. Unsurprisingly, women managers are only rarely found in traditionally male work environments such as manufacture and mining, construction and electricity, gas and water supply sectors.

Figure 2: *Women managers by size of establishment and sector*

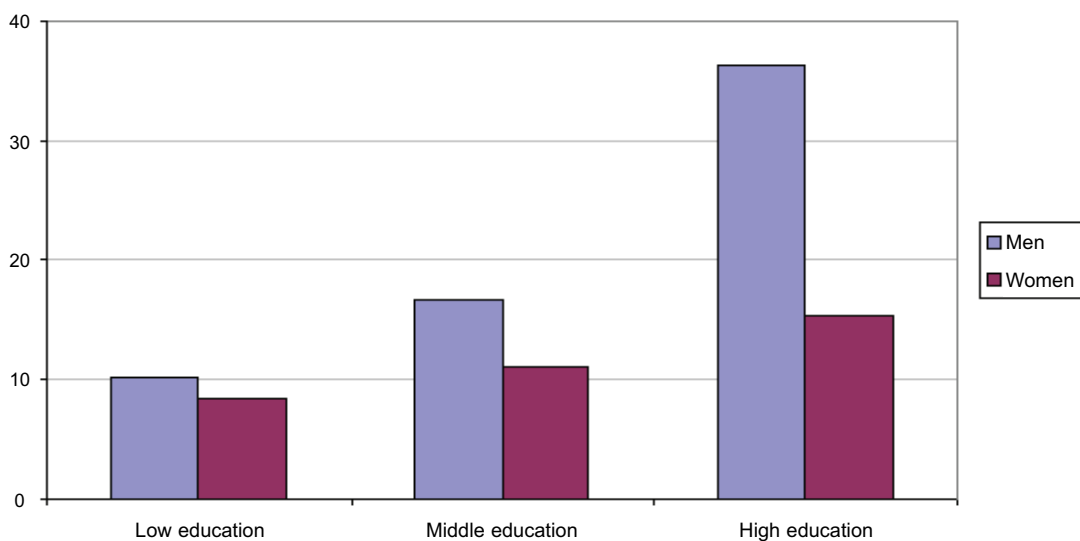


Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

When describing the incidence of female managers, it is also important to pose the question of how men and women become managers. Do they have different kinds of career paths, as the literature suggests, and if they do, where do the differences lie? The answers to these questions shed some light on the process of achieving gender equality.

The shares of employees in managerial positions increase with education for both men and women. However, the returns of a higher education are greater for men than for women as far as attaining managerial positions is concerned (Figure 3). Some 36% of highly educated men¹ work as managers, whereas the proportion of highly educated women having a managerial position is more than two times smaller, at only 15%.

Figure 3: *Share of male and female managers by level of education (%)*

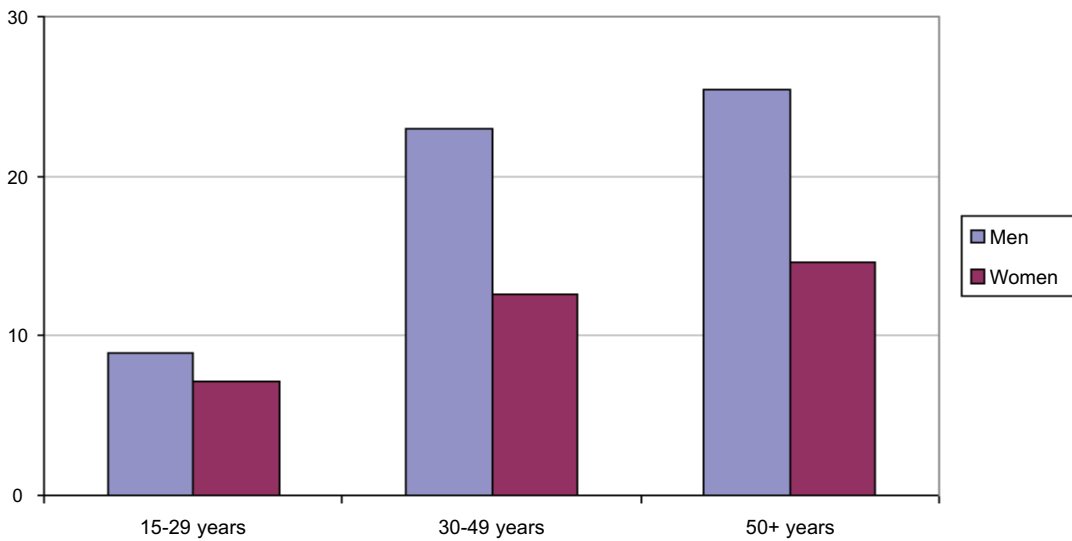


Source: *EWCS (2005)*.

As it usually takes time to advance in a career, to attain a high level of education as well as to reach a managerial position, it is not surprising that less than 10% of 15–29-year-old employees are managers. Within the cohort of 30–49-year-olds, the share of managers increases significantly for men but not for women: 23% of men in this age group work as managers, compared to 13% of women. Thus, the gender gap in reaching managerial positions grows from two to 10 percentage points for 30–49-year-olds and remains almost unchanged for those over 50 years old (Figure 4).

¹ ISCED levels 5 and 6.

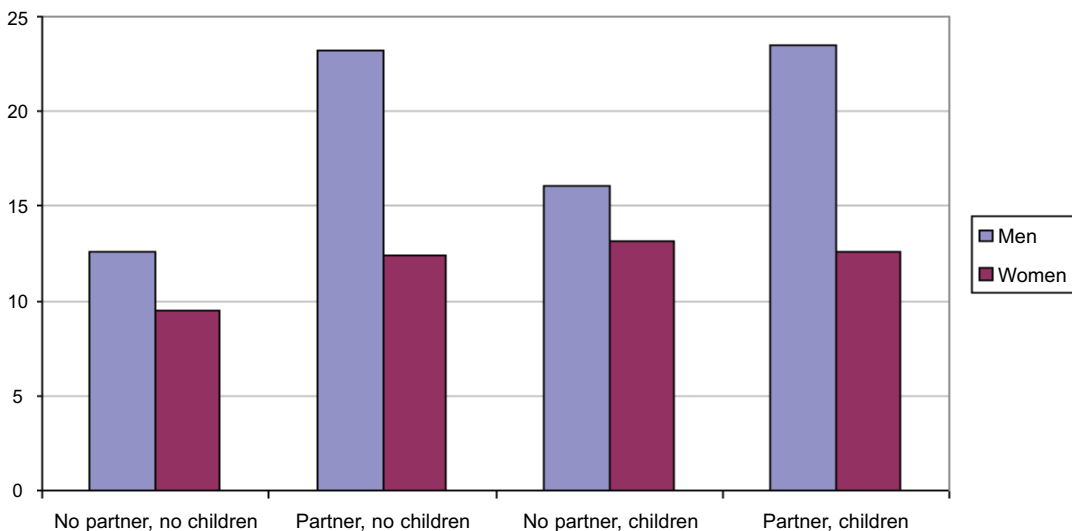
Figure 4: Share of male and female managers by age group (%)



Source: EWCS (2005).

The literature suggests that demands stemming from family life treat men and women unequally, as women are traditionally responsible for home and family. This division of paid and unpaid work is clearly reflected in employment rates, with a higher proportion of men than women in employment. When the family status is looked at, among men, those who have a partner most commonly have a managerial position, whereas among women, those with different family statuses are in a managerial position almost to the same extent. Actually, among women, for those who don't have a partner but who have children, it is most common to have a managerial position compared to other family statuses (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Shares of male and female managers by family status (%) ²



Source: EWCS (2005).

² There are only 37 male managers without a partner but with children in the data.

The careers of men and women are certainly different. For example, education does not seem to help women to advance into supervisory roles as much as it does for men. One explanation may be that at the age of 30 to 49, employees have finished their education and are in the middle of their working lives, but 30 to 49 years is also the age when it is common to have children to take care of. This relates again to the fact that the main responsibility for the family falls on women and that having a family may cause a career break for women, which puts them in a disadvantageous position in working life compared to men.

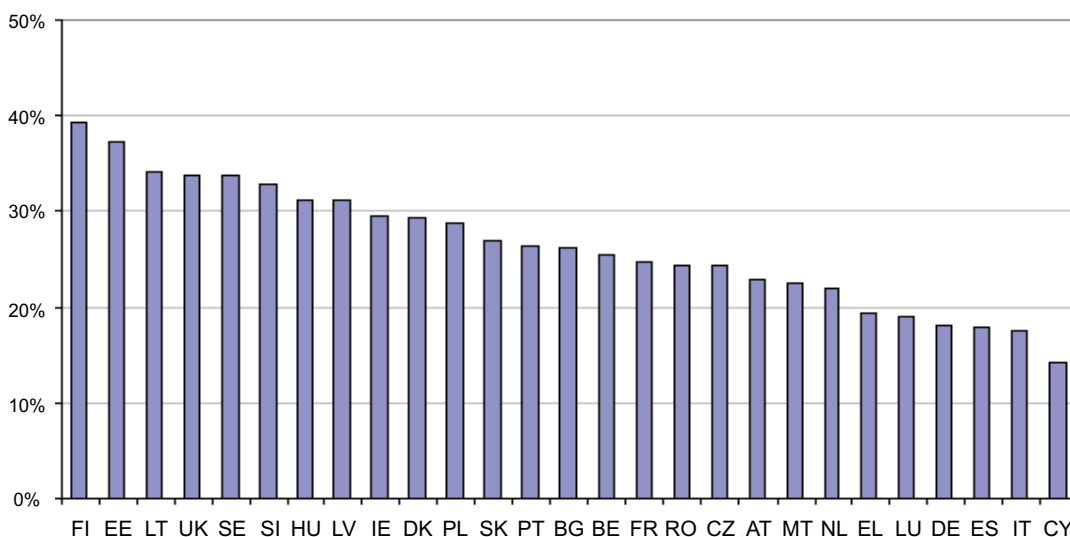
To have a more complete understanding of the situation of women in managerial positions, we will take another perspective in the next section, as we turn attention to the social working environment. More specifically, we will shift the focus to the subordinates of female bosses.

Employees with female bosses

Some 24% of the respondents in the 4th EWCS declared that their immediate boss is a woman. It is noteworthy that there are generally more female managers (33%) than employees who have a female boss. This is true for most of the European countries; only Finland, Luxembourg and Malta are exceptions to this. As discussed earlier, men tend to outnumber women, especially in the upper levels of hierarchy, and this might explain the differences in proportions of female bosses and subordinates of female bosses. Indeed, in the European Union, men in supervisory positions have almost twice as many subordinates than their female colleagues.

As previously shown for the proportion of women in supervisory positions, the proportion of subordinates of female bosses varies greatly by country. However, the ranking of the countries is somewhat different for the share of subordinates of female bosses than for female managers. Finland has the biggest share, with 39% of subordinates with a female boss, while Cyprus has the smallest, at 14%. Generally, there are more workers with a female boss in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia and in the UK and Ireland than in Southern and Continental Europe (Figure 6).

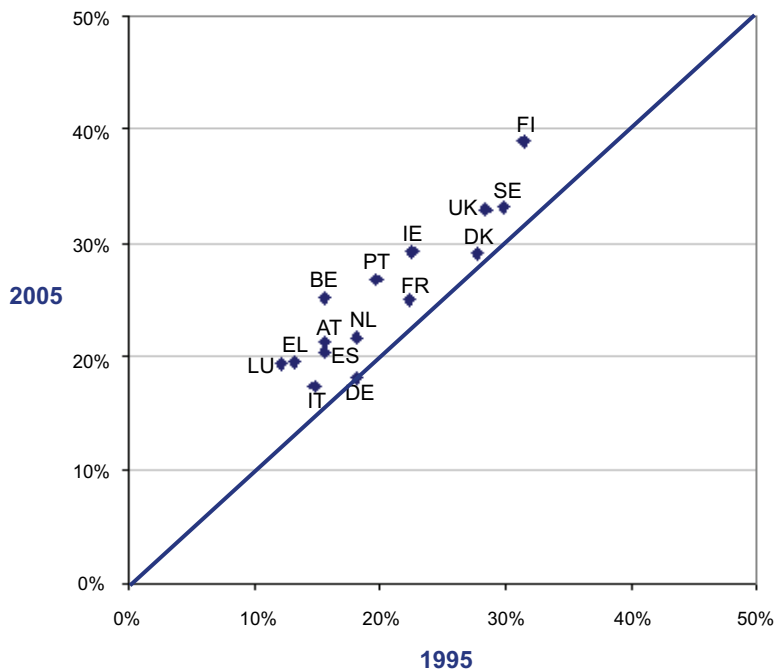
Figure 6: *Employees with female boss by country*



Source: EWCS (2005).

As the EWCS has had three waves and the question about the gender of the boss has been asked in each wave, it is possible to observe trends in the proportions of employees with a female boss in 1995 to 2005 for EU15 countries and in 2001 to 2005 for the new member states. The proportion of employees with a female boss has increased in almost all EU15 countries in the past 10 years (1995 to 2005). Only in Germany has the amount of people under the supervision of a female boss remained stable (18%). The growth has been most rapid in Belgium, where the proportion has grown almost 10 percentage points, up to 25%. This is just above the EU27 average (Figure 7).

Figure 7: *Employees with a female boss, 1995–2005, EU15*

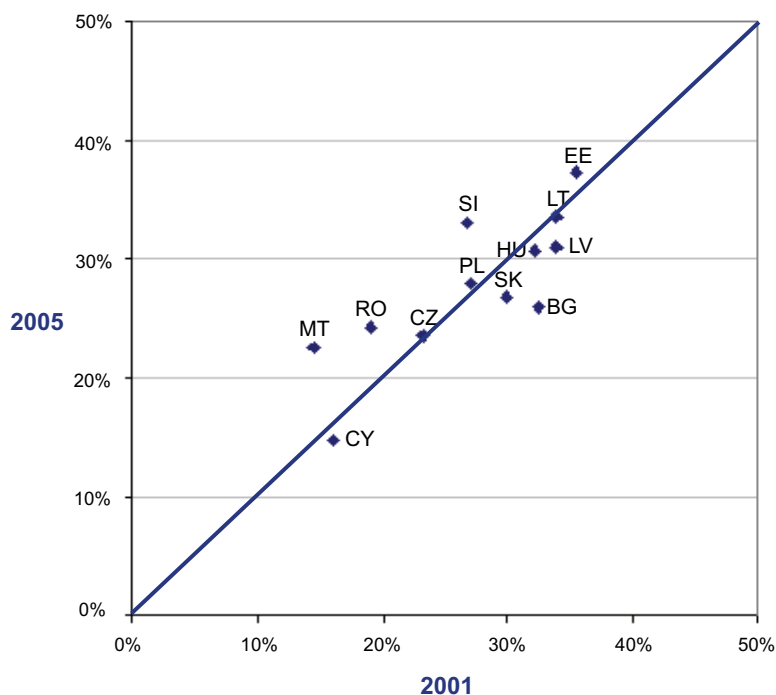


Source: *EWCS (1995, 2005)*.

In the new member states, the number of workers under the supervision of a female boss has decreased in some countries from their first participation in the survey in 2001 to the second wave in 2005.³ Cyprus seems to differ from other European countries, as the country has the smallest proportion of workers with a female boss with no improvement in sight, as the trend is downward. In addition, in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia, there were fewer employees with a female boss in 2005 compared to 2001 (Figure 8).

³ The new member states have only taken part in the two most recent waves of the survey (in 2000/2001 and in 2005), whereas the EU15 countries have participated in the three waves (1995, 2000/2001 and 2005).

Figure 8: *Employees with a female boss, 2001–2005, NMS*

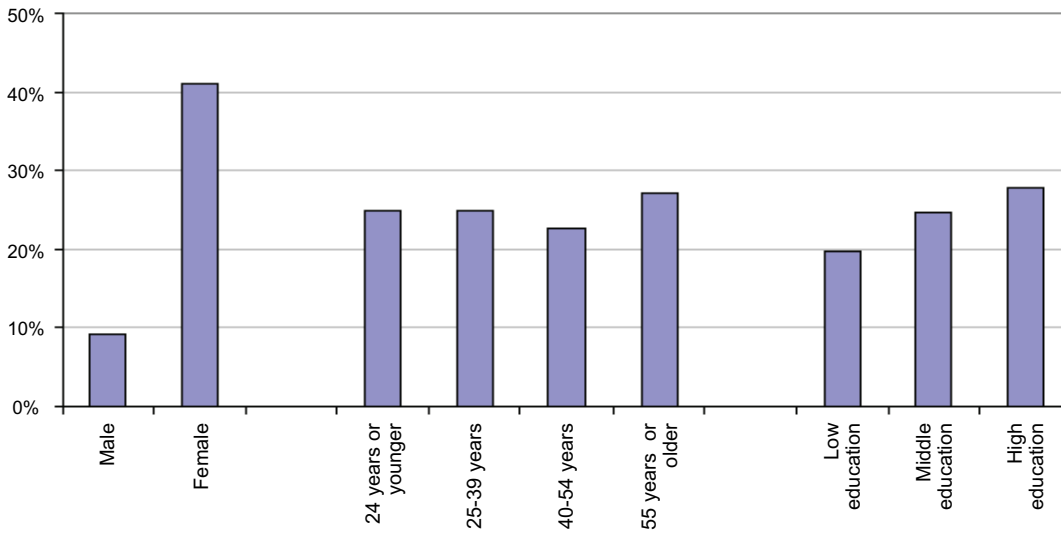


Source: *EWCS (2001, 2005)*.

It remains the case, however, that the share of employees under the supervision of female managers in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia remained above the EU27 average (24%). In some of the old member states, the proportion of people working under the supervision of a woman decreased from 2000 to 2005, namely in Italy and Denmark. In 2005, the share of employees with female bosses was 17% in Italy and 29% in Denmark. In Italy, the decrease was as large as three percentage points, whereas in Denmark, the decrease is hardly noticeable (less than one percentage point).

Subordinates of female bosses have some common characteristics. The sex differentiation is clear: women are much more likely than men to have a female boss. Some 42% of female employees have a woman as their supervisor, whereas only 10% of working men are supervised by a woman (Figure 9). The age of the employee doesn't make a notable difference regarding the gender of the boss. A slightly higher proportion of younger and older workers have a female boss. There are more highly educated employees supervised by a woman compared to employees with low education: 28% of highly educated employees have a female boss, compared to 20% of workers with low education.

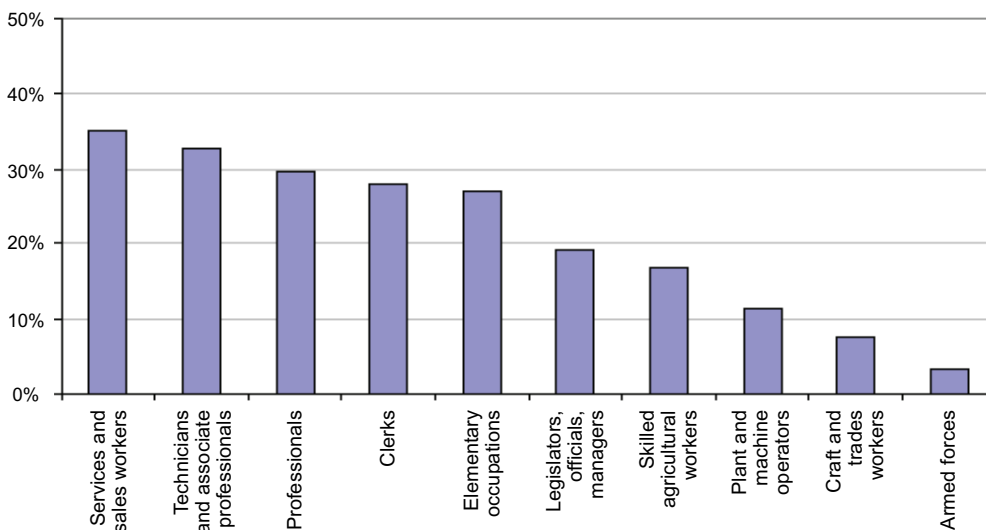
Figure 9: Gender, age and education of employees with a female boss



Source: EWCS (2005).

Because education and occupation are interrelated, it is not surprising that in many high-skilled occupations, it is common to work under a woman’s supervision. Even if there are more subordinates with a female boss among service and sales workers than in any other occupational group, over 30% of technicians and associate professionals work under female bosses. It is quite common for professionals and clerks as well as those working in elementary occupations to have a female boss too. Among legislators, senior officials and managers, however, only 19% are supervised by a woman (Figure 10). This low figure reminds us of the argument that women are clearly outnumbered by men in very high-level managerial positions, as very highly skilled workers who may themselves have managerial position are only rarely supervised by a woman – notwithstanding the fact that there is a tendency for highly skilled workers to have a female boss.

Figure 10: Occupation of employees with a female boss



Source: EWCS (2005).

The survey findings show that there are great country variations in the share of female managers as well as in the share of employees with a female boss. There is also quite clear evidence of gender segregation in terms of female management: in the entire European Union, both female managers and their subordinates are similar when it comes to the sectors and occupations where they work.

In addition to the two background variables (sector and occupation), there are several other factors that together shape the working environment of women managers and their subordinates. As the individual contribution of each of these aspects is difficult to identify using descriptive statistics, more detailed analysis is needed. To get a clear picture of the most important factors that make it likely for an employee to have a female boss, a logistic regression model was used.

Likelihood of having a female boss

In the logistic regression, independent variables that were assumed to have an effect on having a female boss were introduced to the model one by one in order to identify their individual contribution. Based on the descriptives, the following variables were included in the model, stepwise: gender, sector, occupation, position of employee, size of establishment and country. Also, separate regressions were done for EU27 countries as a whole and for country clusters, as it was expected that regional characteristics would have an influence on the determinants of having a female boss and thus the impact of selected variables might be different depending on the country cluster. In order to take this into account, the countries were grouped into five clusters, following the classification used in the 4th EWCS main report (which was based in Esping-Andersen and Ferrara). For all the European countries, the six factors included in the model account for roughly 30% of the total variance of the dependent variable. The explanatory power of the model varies across European regions; it is lowest (24%) in Southern European countries and highest (39%) in Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Determinants of having a female boss*⁴

| Country cluster | | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| | | EU27 | DK, NL, FI, SE | IE, UK | BE, DE, FR, LU, AT | EL, ES, IT, CY, MT, PT | CZ, EE, LV, LT, HU, PL, SI, SK | BG, RO |
| Gender | Male | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference |
| | Female | 4.60 ** | 3.95 ** | 3.4 ** | 4.51 ** | 3.61 ** | 5.89 ** | 4.95 ** |
| Sector | Manufacture and mining | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference | reference |
| | Agriculture and fishing | 0.63 ** | 0.96 | 2.46 | 0.51 | 1.19 | 0.50 ** | 0.59 |
| | Electricity, gas and water supply | 0.70 * | 1.07 | 0.53 | 1.48 | 0.00 | 0.55 * | 0.61 |
| | Construction | 0.38 ** | 0.42 * | 0.37 | 0.12 ** | 0.87 | 0.35 ** | 0.07 ** |
| | Wholesale and retail trade | 1.20 * | 1.26 | 1.07 | 1.61 ** | 1.83 ** | 1.18 | 1.10 |
| | Hotels and restaurants | 0.99 | 2.96 ** | 1.08 | 1.13 | 0.96 | 0.99 | 0.75 |
| | Transport and communication | 0.96 | 1.78 ** | 0.83 | 0.96 | 1.05 | 0.89 | 0.81 |
| | Financial intermediation | 1.54 ** | 2.44 ** | 1.49 | 1.29 | 0.93 | 2.62 ** | 2.85 ** |
| | Real estate | 1.14 | 1.91 ** | 1.03 | 2.13 ** | 1.68 * | 0.59 ** | 0.59 |
| | Public administration and defence | 1.38 ** | 2.56 ** | 1.63 | 1.92 ** | 1.36 | 1.07 | 0.68 |
| | Education | 3.04 ** | 4.46 ** | 2.89 ** | 3.58 ** | 4.42 ** | 2.88 ** | 2.96 ** |
| | Health | 4.15 ** | 10.19 ** | 5.29 ** | 3.75 ** | 5.22 ** | 2.68 ** | 2.84 ** |
| | Other services | 1.64 ** | 2.62 ** | 2.03 * | 2.24 ** | 2.34 ** | 1.06 | 0.97 |

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

⁴ The cells are empty if no significant differences were found.

Table 1: *Determinants of having a female boss (cont'd)*

| | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio | Odds ratio |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Country cluster | EU27 | DK, NL, FI, SE | IE, UK | BE, DE, FR, LU, AT | EL, ES, IT, CY, MT, PT | CZ, EE, LV, LT, HU, PL, SI, SK | BG, RO |
| Occupation | Elementary occupations | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> |
| | Legislators, senior officials and managers | 0.78 * | 0.56 * | 0.86 | 0.60 | 0.91 | 0.60 ** |
| | Professionals | 0.79 ** | 0.54 ** | 1.31 | 0.55 ** | 0.53 ** | 1.00 |
| | Technicians and associate professionals | 0.96 | 0.89 | 1.75 | 0.90 | 0.96 | 0.86 |
| | Clerks | 0.86 * | 0.70 * | 1.34 | 0.60 ** | 0.89 | 1.01 |
| | Service and sales workers | 1.14 | 0.66 * | 1.83 * | 1.56 ** | 1.07 | 1.15 |
| | Skilled agricultural and fishery workers | 0.82 | 0.39 | 0.48 | 1.73 | 0.00 | 0.92 |
| | Craft and related trades workers | 0.64 ** | 0.45 ** | 0.05 ** | 0.38 ** | 0.54 ** | 0.77 |
| | Plant and machine operators | 0.74 ** | 0.20 ** | 0.49 | 0.72 | 0.91 | 0.78 |
| | Armed forces | 0.18 ** | 0.25 | 0.55 | 0.41 | 0.13 * | 0.00 |
| Position of employee | Subordinate | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | | <i>reference</i> | | <i>reference</i> |
| | Supervisor 10 people or less | 0.74 ** | 0.66 * | | 0.64 ** | | 0.79 * |
| | Supervisor more 10 people | 0.64 ** | 0.68 | | 0.44 ** | | 0.45 ** |
| Size of establishment | Micro enterprise (<10) | | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | Small enterprise (10-49) | | | | | | 1.17 |
| | Medium enterprise (50-249) | | | | | | 2.14 |
| | Large enterprise (250+) | | | | | | 0.88 ** |
| Country | AT | 0.61 ** | | | <i>reference</i> | | |
| | BE | 0.69 ** | | | <i>reference</i> | | |
| | BG | <i>reference</i> | | | | | |
| | CY | 0.35 ** | | | | 0.58 ** | |
| | CZ | <i>reference</i> | | | | | 0.64 ** |
| | DK | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | | | | |
| | EE | 1.60 ** | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | FI | 1.46 ** | 1.51 ** | | | | |
| | FR | 0.71 ** | | | <i>reference</i> | | |
| | DE | 0.47 ** | | | 0.70 ** | | |
| | EL | 0.57 ** | | | | <i>reference</i> | |
| | HU | <i>reference</i> | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | IE | <i>reference</i> | | | | | |
| | IT | 0.50 ** | | | | <i>reference</i> | |
| | LV | <i>reference</i> | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | LT | 1.34 ** | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | LU | 0.49 ** | | | <i>reference</i> | | |
| | MT | <i>reference</i> | | | | <i>reference</i> | |
| | NL | 0.57 ** | 0.56 ** | | | | |
| | PL | <i>reference</i> | | | | | 0.72 ** |
| | PT | <i>reference</i> | | | | 1.59 ** | |
| | RO | <i>reference</i> | | | | | |
| | SK | <i>reference</i> | | | | | 0.70 ** |
| | SI | 1.44 ** | | | | | <i>reference</i> |
| | ES | 0.58 ** | | | | <i>reference</i> | |
| | SE | <i>reference</i> | <i>reference</i> | | | | |
| | UK | <i>reference</i> | | | | | |
| Nagelkerke's r² | 0.30 | 0.39 | 0.34 | 0.29 | 0.24 | 0.31 | 0.28 |

Note: ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

As presented in the table above, the sex of the subordinate herself (or himself) is the main determinant of having a female boss; in the European Union, women are supervised by other women almost 4.6 times more often compared to male employees, even when sector, occupation, position of employee, size of establishment and individual country

characteristics are controlled for. In Eastern European countries and in the newest member states, Bulgaria and Romania, the differences are even bigger in this respect. Eastern European countries in particular stand out from other clusters, as Eastern European women are 5.9 times more likely to have a female boss compared to men in these countries.

The odds of having a female boss in various sectors is considered in comparison with manufacture and mining, which is used in the model as the reference category. As could be anticipated based on the descriptives of female managers and their subordinates, in Europe it is most common to have a female boss in the health and education sectors. In the health sector, it is 4.1 times more likely and in the education sector it is 3.0 times more likely to have a female manager compared to the reference category. However, in construction, the odds ratio is 0.4, reflecting the scarcity of employees with a female boss in this sector.

When observed by country clusters, there are interesting deviations from the EU-level results. In the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, the odds of having a woman as a supervisor in the education and health sectors are the highest (4.5 in education and 10.2 in health). It is also significantly more common to have a female boss in hotels and restaurants, financial intermediation and public administration sectors in this cluster compared to the EU as a whole. It seems that sector is a particularly powerful determinant for having a female boss in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. It is also worth noting that in Eastern European countries, the odds of having a female boss are much smaller in real estate sectors when compared with other parts of Europe. And in the newest member states, Bulgaria and Romania, and in Continental countries it is extremely rare for employees to have a female boss in the construction sector. Finally, Southern Europe is the region where the likelihood of an employee having a woman as his/her boss in the wholesale and retail sector is the highest in Europe.

As far as occupations in EU27 countries are concerned, there are significant differences in the likelihood of having a female boss for professionals, craft and trades workers, plant and machine operators and for those working in the armed forces. In all of these occupations, it is more common to have a male than a female boss when 'elementary occupations' is used as the reference category. It is hardly a surprise that in the 'armed forces' occupation category, the odds of having a female boss are lowest (odds ratio 0.2), for the sector is an archetypically male territory, where women have been accepted only recently in many countries.

To get a more precise picture, it is necessary to look at occupations at the country cluster level. It is noteworthy that it is even less likely for professionals to have a female manager in Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, Continental countries and in Southern European countries compared to the EU as a whole. Craft and related trades workers, on the other hand, are rarely supervised by a woman in Ireland and the United Kingdom and also less often in Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands and in Continental countries compared to Europe as a whole. Continental countries are quite distinctive as far as clerks and service and sales workers are concerned. In these occupations, it is either rare or common to have a female manager, with clerks having low odds (odds ratio 0.6) and service and sales workers having a high probability (odds ratio 1.6) of having a female boss.

It has been argued that even if women have attained more managerial positions in the 2000s than ever before, these positions are still at a lower hierarchical level compared to the status of male managers. This argument seems to be well founded, as it is also verified by our results from the 4th EWCS, 2005. When compared to subordinates (reference category), it is rarer for supervisors of 10 people or fewer to have a female boss, and the odds ratio for having a woman manager is lowest for those who are supervisors of more than 10 people. At a regional level, in Continental countries and Southern European countries, it is even less probable that middle-level managers (having more than 10 subordinates) have a female boss in comparison with their colleagues in all EU27 countries.

Size of establishment is not a significant determinant of having a female boss. Only in the cluster containing Bulgaria and Romania it is more common for workers in medium-sized enterprises to have a woman manager compared to the reference category (micro enterprises).

The last factor included in the model was country, in order to try to identify potential outliers from each cluster or the EU as a whole. In the EU, after controlling for the elements discussed above, workers in Estonia, Finland, Lithuania and Slovenia are more likely to work under a woman boss, while employees in Cyprus, Germany, Greece and the Netherlands are much less likely to be supervised by a woman when countries are compared.

The country cluster observation reveals, firstly, that in the clusters of Ireland and the UK and the newest member states, Bulgaria and Romania, there are not significant differences between the two countries in each cluster in the odds of having a female boss. However, other clusters (also containing more countries) are not as homogenous. In relation to the cluster of Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, Finland stands out as a country, where it is 1.5 times more likely to have a female boss compared to Denmark and Sweden (reference). In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the odds of having a female superior are lower compared to the two reference countries. Among Continental countries, Germany differs from others as a country where employees are rarely managed by a woman. Unsurprisingly, in the Southern European cluster, workers rarely have a female boss in Cyprus, but in Portugal the odds of having a woman manager are 1.6 times higher compared to the reference countries. Among Eastern European countries, in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia it is less common to have a female boss compared to other countries in the cluster.

The empirical analysis of the European Working Conditions Survey confirms many of the issues raised by previous research. The proportions of female managers are still low in many European countries, even if the overall trend is showing that the gap is slowly closing. But gender equality is not just about proportions of women and men at the top – professionals, middle managers and supervisors are rarely managed by women, so that women seem to have special difficulties in reaching the highest positions. Women managers are mostly working together with other women in female-dominated sectors and occupations.

The next section looks at workplace dynamics in an attempt to find explanations for the low numbers of women managers from differences in leadership style. Are there differences in the behaviour of male and female bosses that might explain why it is more common for men than women to occupy a managerial role?

3

Gender roles and management styles

For many years, it was almost accepted as a given (both by mainstream and critical feminist scholars writing about this issue) that the desired characteristics of a business leader in contemporary capitalist economies were those of an alpha male: they had to be ruthless and aggressive, results driven and intensely competitive (see Ludeman and Erlandson, 2006). These are all characteristics that, in the contemporary European conceptions of gender, are associated with men: in fact, the characteristics of the stereotypical female are constructed precisely in opposition to them (the cultural values attached to both genders are constructed in opposition). This implies that there might be an invisible (cultural) barrier for women, making it difficult for them to enter into managerial roles: if they want to enter these alpha male positions, they must behave like an alpha male themselves.

In recent years, human resource management literature has advocated quite a radical shift in the understanding of what it takes to be a good leader, a shift that has interesting implications for the present discussion. Rather than emphasising power, aggressiveness, competitiveness, etc., this new literature has tended to focus on the importance of 'softer' skills, such as communication and emotional bonding with subordinates. Interestingly, these new features of a good manager can be interpreted as well in terms of gender stereotypes: if the traditional manager was an alpha male, this new type of manager is clearly de-masculinised and arguably acquires many stereotypical 'female' characteristics (such as communication, caring, emotional bonding). This kind of idea seems to be related to a recent relative increase, at least in terms of public perception (as suggested, for instance, by a Newsweek special on female business leaders in October 2007), in the degree of penetration of women into leadership positions.

There is an important nuance to be noted in terms of the interpretation of the importance of gender roles and traits for determining the suitability of women for leadership: it can either be understood literally or as a description of perceptions. If understood literally, it implies that women (as far as they conform to stereotypical female characteristics) *cannot* be good managers because in order to be a good manager, one must have male characteristics. If understood as a description of perceptions rather than realities, it implies that both men and women can be excellent managers, but that because of the stereotype barrier, women will not be *perceived* as such. The result is very similar, but the implications in terms of fairness and justice are obviously completely different.

Many researchers have tried to address this popular question of whether there are gender differences in leadership styles. According to Eagly (2007), female leaders are more *transformational* than male leaders, whose styles are more transactional. Transformational leaders are described as mentoring and empowering their subordinates and encouraging them to develop their potential, and the style is said to be the most effective. Transactional leaders are more conventional; they are depicted as clarifying subordinates' responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives and correcting them for failing to meet the objectives. Eagly finds two possible explanations for the differences. Transformational style is more compatible with the female gender role than older models of leadership. Also, it might be that women managers are more highly qualified than men, since men have greater access to leadership roles compared to women.

In an earlier meta-analysis, Eagly et al. (2003) distinguished three kinds of leadership styles that men and women occupy: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire styles. The last one is described as a failure to take responsibility for managing. In the analysis, a social role theory approach to leadership behaviour was applied, highlighting the fact that leadership roles are constrained by gender roles. According to Eagly et al., a transformational style suits the female gender role, and adapting that style is a way for them to perform as managers. The analysis of 45 studies revealed small but significant sex differences in most aspects of the leadership styles generally, with women acting more in transformational ways (as well as in terms of transactional style, women deliver rewards to subordinates for appropriate performance more often than men), and men more in transactional and laissez-faire styles.

Survey-based research confirms the picture described in the meta-analyses. Melero (2004) used the British Workplace Employment Relationship Survey from 1998 to see how the share of women in management affects organisations'

human resources policies, including, for example, task definition, decision-making, communication and delegation. He found that the way workplaces are managed varies with the gender composition of the managerial team – an increase in the percentage of women at management level is associated with more intense interpersonal communication, higher involvement of managers in employees' career administration and with more democracy in decision-making at the workplace.

Melero gives credit to women managers for implementing these positive changes at the workplace. He assumes that men and women have different qualities and thus they act differently when managing. Still, one might question the direction of the relation: is it women managers who are the behind these policies, or is it that more progressive organisations are more accessible for women leaders than other workplaces?

The results of qualitative studies give a more nuanced view of leadership styles, gender differences and their relationship with the context where the leadership is practised. Rutherford (2001) asked male and female managers in a large airline if they thought that men and women manage differently: 84% of female and 55% of male managers believed there were differences. The question as to what ways they differ elicited three kinds of answers. Women were considered to have better people skills, to have fewer status concerns and generally to have better managerial skills compared to men.

A study about conceptions of 'successful leadership' held by men and women CEOs in Scotland revealed that not only good performance is essential for successful leadership – managing relationships and a personal and organisational profile with a number of stakeholders also have to be taken into account. The women interviewed in the study expressed preferences for more transformational leadership, but so did most of the interviewed male CEOs. The interviewees reported a shift towards a more androgynous style, where both transactional and transformational behaviours are employed. Still, women CEOs considered that leadership is stereotyped as masculine and that the stereotyping forms a barrier for women (Collins and Singh, 2006).

It is important to note that in qualitative studies (e.g. Collins and Singh, 2006; Rutherford, 2001), the participants are expressing their subjective evaluations of the characteristics of male and female bosses. The results reflect both common ways of thinking (i.e. stereotypes) and objective reality. One should not jump to the conclusion that men and women really do differ in some ways when they act as managers. Instead, the results can be treated as evidence of a tendency for stereotypical evaluations from which even the managers cannot escape. Men and women may differ in significant ways in their leadership style, but this assumption cannot be confirmed by the studies described above.

Many of the recently conducted studies use the role theories and stereotypes as a frame of analysis, as sex roles and 'biases in evaluation' are commonly introduced as explaining the inequality between men and women. Instead of only examining male and female leaders, subordinates are also often included in the setting. For example, Johnson (1994) argues that manager role requirements and status reduce any effect of gender on the communication between managers and subordinates. However, differences may lie in the expression of nonverbal behaviour, such as smiling and laughing. This is in line with Eagly's thoughts (2007, p. 4). She assumed that since the expectations that the leadership role brings shape the behaviour of both men and women managers in particular directions, it is likely that any differences in the leadership styles of women and men are small, and that female–male differences in leadership behaviours are most likely to occur in those behaviours that go beyond the requirements of organisational roles.

In addition, Callan (1993) has examined manager–subordinate communication. He expected that male and female managers who adopt a relationship-oriented style would be judged as allowing more opportunities for male and female subordinates to discuss issues and to disclose their concerns in comparison to leaders with a task-oriented style. It was also assumed that subordinates who judged the communication to be more frequent and of higher quality would be more satisfied.

Managers perceived conversations to be more frequent compared to the perceptions of subordinates, irrespective of the gender or leadership style of managers. However, the perceptions of subordinates varied. Female subordinates believed that managers allowed them fewer opportunities for discussion compared to perceptions of their male counterparts. The discrepancy of perceptions was largest between female subordinates and female managers. Callan explains the result by saying that stereotypically female managers should (especially when relating to other women) show empathy and open communication. Still, many female managers adopt a more masculine style of leadership and can thus be judged negatively (Callan, 1993).

Wolfram and Mohr (2006) studied how leaders are evaluated by their direct followers and whether evaluations are affected by the gender of leaders and followers, gender-typical behaviour and followers' gender role attitudes. The results indicate that female leaders might have difficulties being accepted in organisational practice, since male followers showed low professional respect for them. Female leaders behaving in a gender role discrepant manner were evaluated more negatively than gender role discrepant male leaders, and female leaders received less respect from traditional than from progressive followers.

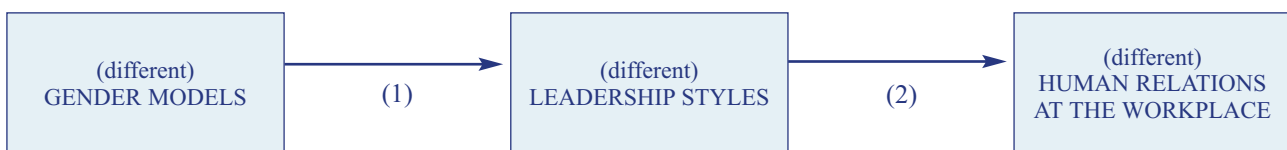
Kawakami et al. (2000) tried to find out if the 'double bind' exists and if women could be freed from the constraints of gender roles. They studied evaluations of female managers who were giving a speech in a gender-inconsistent way (acting in a masculine way). Their conclusion was that even if women who acted in a gender-consistent way got the most positive evaluations, women managers can behave in a masculine manner too and be liked as long as they are perceived as genuine (not playing a role in their action).

To sum up, previous research indicates rather consistently that female leadership styles or behaviour differ from male, even if the differences might be small. Most studies report that women lead in a more transformational style compared to men. Transformational style is usually evaluated positively (e.g. Eagly et al., 2003, p. 587). Studies concentrating on subordinates of male and female bosses paint a more negative picture, with female subordinates reporting that they have few opportunities to discuss issues with their female bosses, and male subordinates showing low professional respect for female leaders.

Analytical strategy

What is important is that all these explanations seem to agree on something at a very basic level: they all assume a difference in the 'leadership style' of men and women. According to this assumption, when they are in positions of power, men and women tend to behave differently, and this behaviour has important implications for their performance as leaders and for their relationship with their subordinates. The logic is quite simple: it is reasonable to assume that the different patterns of behaviour and communication traditionally associated to both genders generate different leadership behaviour and communication styles, and that this style can have, in general terms, some type of impact on the performance of leaders, and particularly in the human relations with their subordinates (in the case of workplace managers, in the human relations at the workplace).

Figure 11: *Analytical framework*



If (as a broad generalisation) the existence of a difference in patterns of behaviour of men and women (gender models) is assumed, it is possible that some difference in the leadership style of both genders may exist (1). But the critical issue here is (2): whether these differences in leadership style do have a significant impact in human relations in the workplace. As has just been discussed, this is also assumed in most literature on this issue, either positively or negatively: female bosses are assumed to generate different relations, communication and conditions at the workplace than male bosses. But this is entirely an empirical issue, something that can be tested by looking at whether there is any evidence of such a relationship between the gender of the boss and the relations/conditions at the workplace.

In this section, the analytical strategy is formulated as follows: if there are different leadership styles for men and women, and if they are relevant in terms of human relations/conditions at work, they should have some type of impact in several different aspects of work as evaluated by the workers themselves. To contrast this hypothesis, different variables from the survey are used. The variables that are covered are all measures of the worker's evaluation of either human relations or conditions at work that can arguably be affected to some extent by the worker's direct boss: namely, autonomy at work and direct control of work pace by the boss (a measure of the degree of latitude permitted by the hierarchical superior); the perceived ability to do creative work and whether it is encouraged by the boss; the worker's evaluation of the communication with and support from the immediate boss; the perception of bullying and harassment at the workplace (an indirect measure of the performance of the leader in organising human relations at the workplace); job satisfaction (again, an indirect measure, in this case of the potential impact of the boss's ability to organise a well-functioning human environment in the workplace); and finally, stress and the perceived intensity of the work effort. All of these are direct or indirect measures of the worker's perception of the human environment at work, something which the worker's direct superior should have some impact on.

In order to properly test our basic hypothesis, it is crucial to try to make sure that any difference found between the perceptions of workers managed by men and women are actually the result of the gender of their bosses, and not of other characteristics of their work situation. In other words, we have to be very careful not to interpret as real an apparent but spurious relation between our dependent (relations/conditions of work) and independent variables (gender of immediate superior). This is likely to happen because our independent variable tends to be strongly associated with other variables that also have an impact on the relations or conditions of work, as was seen in the previous section. For instance, female bosses are much more in the health and educational sectors, and in these sectors the communication with superiors, the stress levels and the levels of autonomy are quite different from, say, construction (where female bosses are rare). If the differences caused by sector are not taken into account, it may be wrongly assumed that some of these differences are caused by the gender of the boss. Basically, we will try to solve this by using a multivariate logistic regression model with sector and occupation dummies acting as control variables, so that the effect of these variables is eliminated from the coefficients.

A related and even more important issue to take into account in this respect is the gender of the subordinate. Female managers are much more likely to be managers of other women; as we are dealing with the subjective evaluation of workplace relations by the subordinates, and these evaluations can be considerably affected by gender, this may also bias our results. In fact, there is an even more substantial problem here: it is highly likely that the gender of the superior and the gender of the subordinate will interact with each other (which means that when looking at the effects of the gender of the boss, it is important to also take the gender of the subordinate into account in each case). Thus, in our analysis, we will always look at the gender of both counterparts simultaneously, by constructing our independent variable as a four-category variable: male boss with male subordinate, male boss with female subordinate, female boss with male subordinate and female boss with female subordinate.

This issue will be looked at for the entire European Union. But as is already known, there are considerable differences in female participation in the labour force across different countries (not to mention differences in gender stereotypes). This suggests that the potential impact of the gender of the boss may vary across countries, so we have run all the

econometric models both at the overall European level (taking the EU as a whole, without taking into account the country level) and for the different European regions discussed in the previous section.

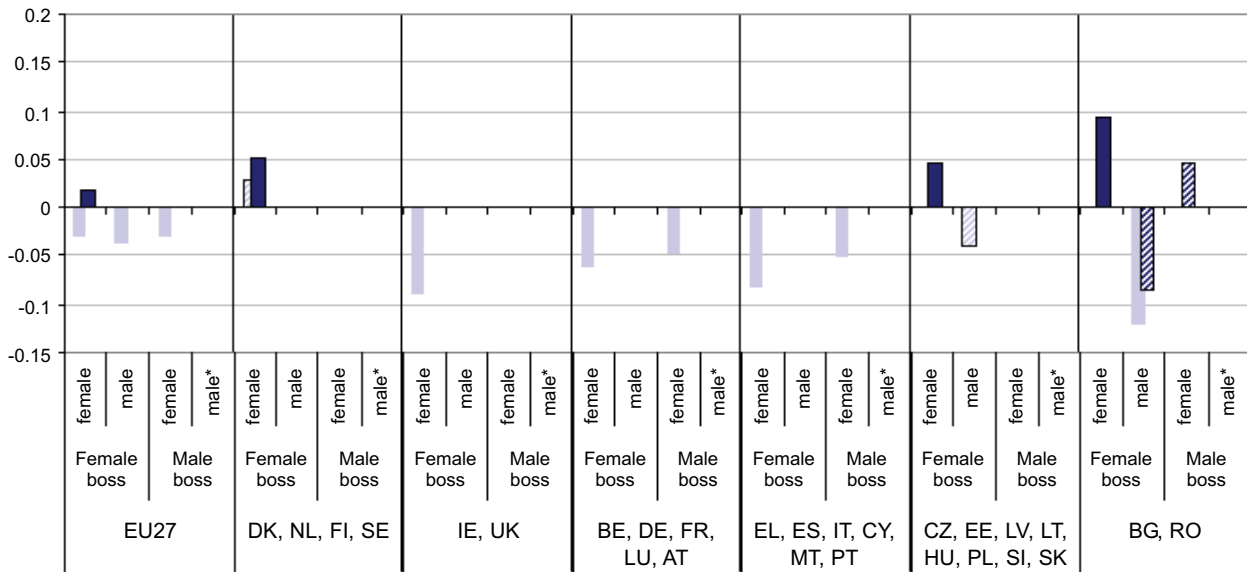
Gender of the boss and human relations at the workplace

In this section, following the analytical strategy explained above, we will study the influence of the gender of the boss in different aspects of human relations at the workplace. We can organise the indicators of human relations at the workplace that we will use in three categories.

1. A first group of indicators can be characterised as *direct indicators of the relationship between the respondent and his/her boss*. We will look at three such indicators: the discussion with the direct boss of work-related problems (an indicator of the fluidity of communication), whether the respondent is consulted on changes in work organisation (an indicator of consultation and participation) and whether the respondent considers that he/she can get direct assistance from his/her boss if needed (an indicator of support). These indicators are the less problematic for the intentions of this report, as they can be understood as relatively direct evaluations of the respondent of his/her relationship with his/her boss, and therefore should be more clearly affected by the gender of the superior if it does have any effect.
2. A second group of indicators refers to the autonomy or decision latitude of the worker in his/her daily work, which is at least potentially affected by his/her direct boss. It is a plausible hypothesis that the direct boss has an important role to play in terms of the autonomy of the subordinate in day-to-day work tasks, even though in this case the influence of structural characteristics of the workplace (partly captured through sector) and of the position of the individual worker in work organisation (which is partly captured by occupation) is obviously important as well. For this reason, the statistical control by sector and occupation is even more important for this group of variables. These variables are a composite measure of autonomy at work (which we will explain in some detail later), the worker's ability to apply his/her own ideas at work and whether the worker is directly controlled by his/her boss in his/her work process.
3. Finally, we will also look at a set of indicators of the psychological work environment. In this case, the potential impact of the worker's direct boss is much more indirect, but it can arguably be important nevertheless. These indicators are perceived intensity of work (measured with a composite scale), having been subject to bullying and harassment at the workplace, suffering sexual discrimination at the workplace and the overall level of job satisfaction. These are all indicators that obviously depend on a wide variety of variables other than the behaviour of the worker's direct boss (and his/her gender), but they are potentially affected by it so we will nevertheless explore them.

All the analysis carried out in this section will be based in multivariate regression models (analysis of variance for continuous dependent variables and logistic regressions for binary dependent variables). For simplifying the presentation of the results from the multivariate models, we will use the graphical representation shown in Figure 12. Even though this kind of representation is easier to grasp than the coefficients in a multivariate regression table, it is still quite complicated because it holds quite a large amount of information. For that reason, we will take a bit of time first to explain in some detail how to interpret the graphs that will be used in this section.

Figure 12: *Work intensity*



Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

All the graphs show the information broken down by European regions, including the coefficients for the whole of the EU27 as well. To explain how to interpret the graphs, we will concentrate on the EU27 section of the graph on the influence of the gender of the boss in work intensity, as shown in Figure 12. Of course, the interpretation of the results for individual European regions follows exactly the same principle.

Within each European region, the figure differentiates four categories based on the gender of the boss and the gender of the subordinate (the label for the gender of the boss is represented horizontally and the gender of the subordinate is represented vertically). In all graphs, the bars represent the coefficients in a regression model (in some cases, an analysis of variance model, while in some others a logistic regression model), with male workers with a male boss as the reference category. That is, each individual bar represents how different each of the other three categories (male and female workers with a female boss, and female workers with a male boss) is from the reference category (male workers with a male boss).

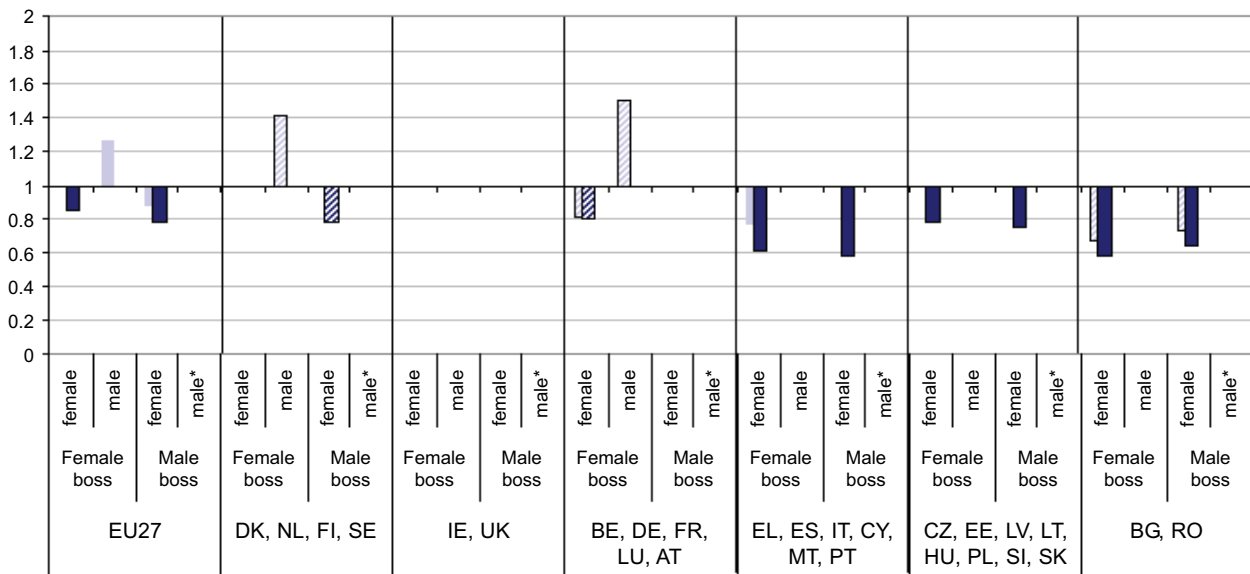
The bars are colour coded to represent the coefficients and their significance. A light blue bar represents the coefficients in a simple bivariate regression, with no control variables. For instance, for the EU27 for work intensity, the light blue bars show that workers with female bosses (both men and women) and female workers with a male boss report significantly lower levels of work intensity than male workers with a male boss (the reference category), but *without controlling for the sectors and occupations in which they work*. The darker blue bars represent the coefficients with controls by sector and occupation. In this case, by comparing the light and dark blue bars, we can conclude that the impact of managers' gender on work intensity was entirely the result of the composition by sector and occupation of the different categories of workers: once we control by these two factors, the lower intensity of work for those with female managers disappears, and female workers with female managers actually show a slightly higher degree of intensity than the reference category. When there is no bar, it is because the coefficient is not statistically significant (the difference between that category and the reference category is not significantly different from 0). And when the bar is hatched (shaded with blue diagonal lines), it is only significant at the 0.05 level (when it is not hatched, it is significant at the 0.01 level).

Thus, the interpretation of the results from Figure 12 for the EU27 is that even though workers with female bosses tend to declare lower levels of work intensity, this is entirely due to the sectoral and occupational composition of their jobs. Once controlled by occupation and sector, there is no difference between workers with a male or female boss, with only female workers with a female boss reporting a slightly higher degree of intensity at work.

Relationship between female bosses and their subordinates

Figure 13 shows the first indicator, which refers to whether the respondents discussed work-related problems with their boss over the 12 months previous to the survey (overall in the EU, 57% of workers responded affirmatively). The graphic suggests that it is not so much the gender of the boss, but the gender of the subordinate which matters here, a pattern that we will see for many other indicators. As can be seen in the figure for the EU27, women with male or female bosses both report a lower degree of communication with their bosses (after controlling by occupation and sector). This result is not equally spread across Europe: in the Nordic countries, the UK and Ireland and Continental Europe, there is no difference between men and women, nor between the gender of their respective boss. Where the European difference comes from is clearly Southern and Eastern European countries, where women declare significantly lower degrees of communication with their superiors.

Figure 13: *Discussing work-related problems*

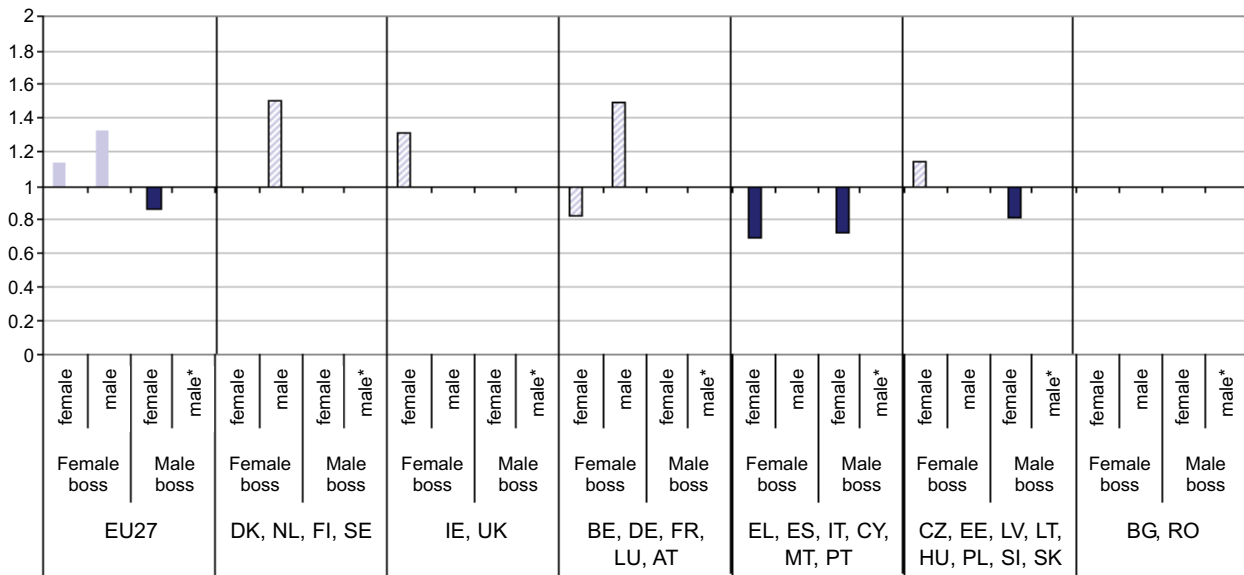


Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.

Source: EWCS (2005).

Regarding consultation about changes in work organisation (around 47% of all European workers were consulted about changes in work organisation in the last 12 months), there are no clear differences between the four categories of our independent variable (Figure 14). Only in Southern Europe do we find a similar pattern to the one discussed earlier for communication with superiors: it is women, regardless of the gender of their boss, who report less consultation about changes in Southern European countries.

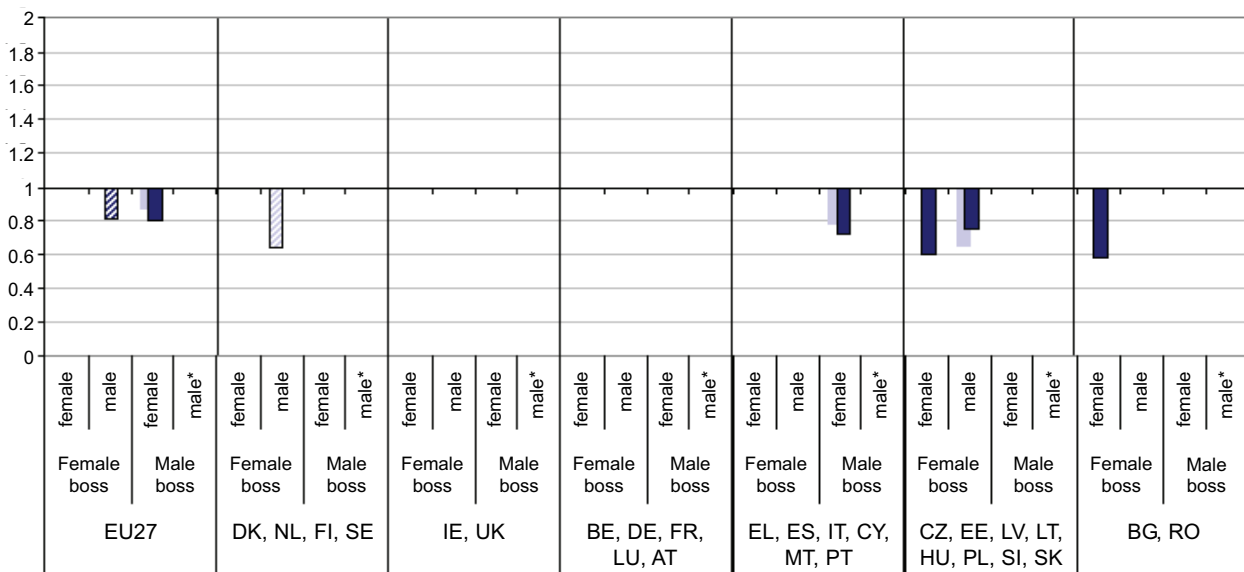
Figure 14: Consultation about changes



Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

Finally, Figure 15 shows the indicator on whether the respondent feels that he/she can get assistance from his/her boss if necessary (around 51% of all workers consider they can get assistance from their bosses at least often). In this case, what seems to matter is not so much the gender of the worker or the gender of his/her boss, but the combination of both: it seems to be mixed subordinate–superior combinations that are more negative in terms of the feeling of having support from the superior. Men with a female boss and women with a male boss report lower degrees of support than men and women with a boss of the same sex as themselves. But in any case, looking at the results for the individual European regions, it seems quite likely that the overall EU figures result from the combination of the different country results: actually, in most European regions there is no difference whatsoever. Only in Southern Europe does it seem that women with a male boss report lower support from above, and in Eastern Europe both sexes report lower support when they are managed by a woman.

Figure 15: Assistance from boss



Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

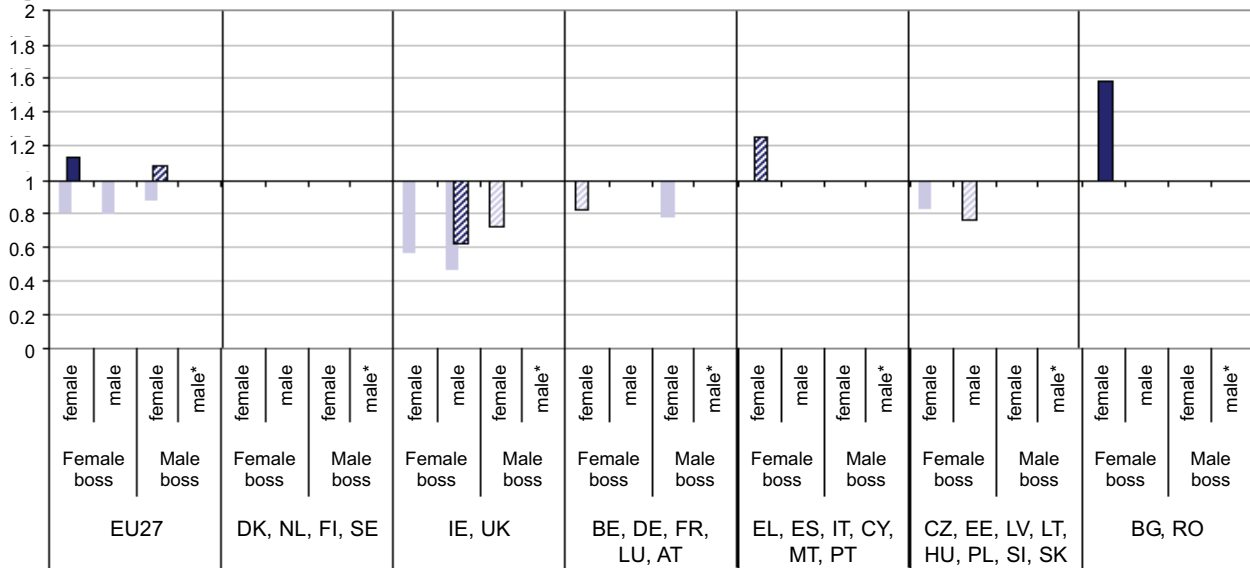
Thus, in terms of the direct indicators of communication and relationship with superiors, the results do not give any support to the hypothesis that the boss’s gender makes any significant difference. Actually, the subordinate’s gender seems to be much more important for workers’ perceptions of the degree of communication with their superiors than the gender of the superiors themselves⁵ (women tend to report lower levels of communication). Also, the results shown point to very different situations in the different European regions: in the UK and Ireland, the Nordic countries and Continental Europe, there are no significant differences between the different combinations of the gender of superiors and subordinates, whereas in Southern and Eastern European, women clearly report lower levels of communication with their superiors.

Female bosses and autonomy of subordinates

The second set of indicators that are discussed here concerns the degree of perceived autonomy of subordinates. As was already mentioned above, this area is less directly linked to the subordinate–superior relationship than the one previously discussed, and therefore, the potential impact of the gender of the workers’ boss is lower. It is still worth looking at because, especially regarding autonomy for day-to-day tasks at work, the attitude and behaviour of the worker’s direct boss probably has quite a lot of importance.

The link is clear in the first indicator, which refers to whether the pace of work is directly controlled by the worker’s immediate boss (33% of all European workers responded positively). Even though this type of pace constraint is strongly affected by the sector and the worker’s position, it is highly likely to also be influenced by the behaviour of the boss him/herself.

Figure 16: *Direct control of boss*



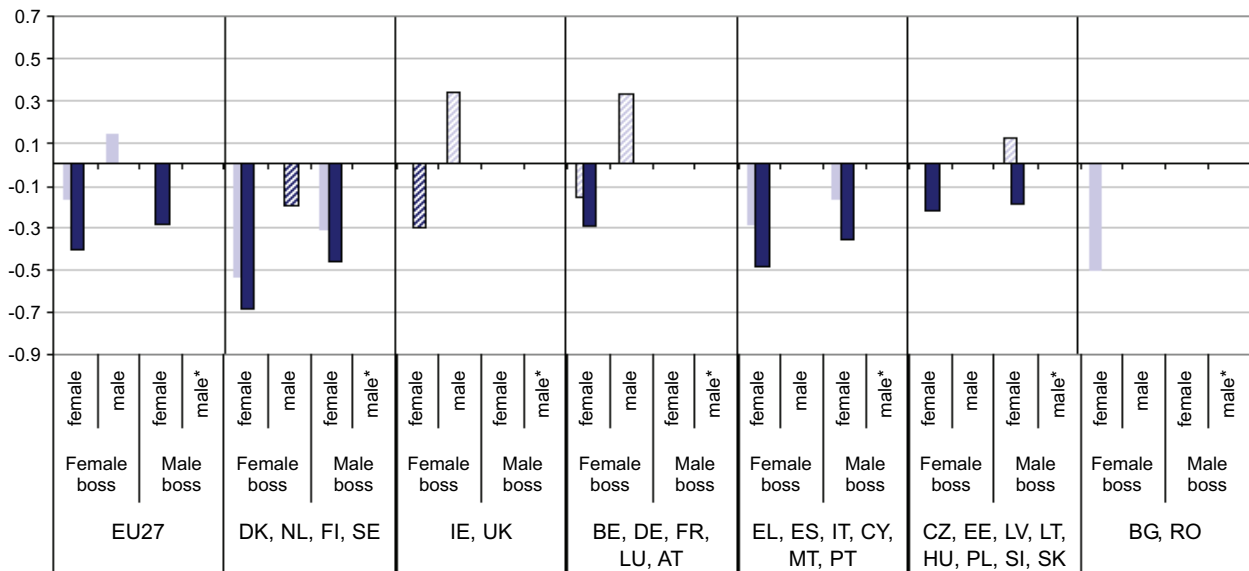
Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

⁵ Another variable that we have tested but not included here (*discussion with the immediate superior about work performance*) gives similar results: women tend to declare lower levels of communication with superiors, irrespective of the gender of the latter (especially in Southern and Eastern Europe).

Do we see any difference in this indicator according to the boss's gender? Do female bosses control the pace of work of their subordinates more or less strictly? As can be seen in Figure 16, we do not find any difference according to the boss's gender: in fact, it is again the subordinate's gender that seems to have a small influence on the reported levels of control by superiors. This relationship appears to be statistically significant at the EU27 level, but it is so small that it does not appear significantly in any of the individual country clusters⁶ (in the different EU regions, no clear pattern emerges, except for women with female bosses in Bulgaria and Romania reporting higher levels of control by their bosses).

Figure 17 shows a composite measure of autonomy at work,⁷ and in this case we can discern some considerably clearer patterns. Once again, these patterns do not point to any clear difference between those managed by men and women, but only to a clear difference between male and female *subordinates*, irrespective of the gender of their managers. In the EU27 as a whole and in Nordic, Southern and Eastern European countries, female workers report considerably lower levels of autonomy at work than male workers, irrespective of the gender of their managers, once we control for sector and occupation (in fact, this effect is enlarged when we control by sector and occupation).

Figure 17: *Work autonomy*



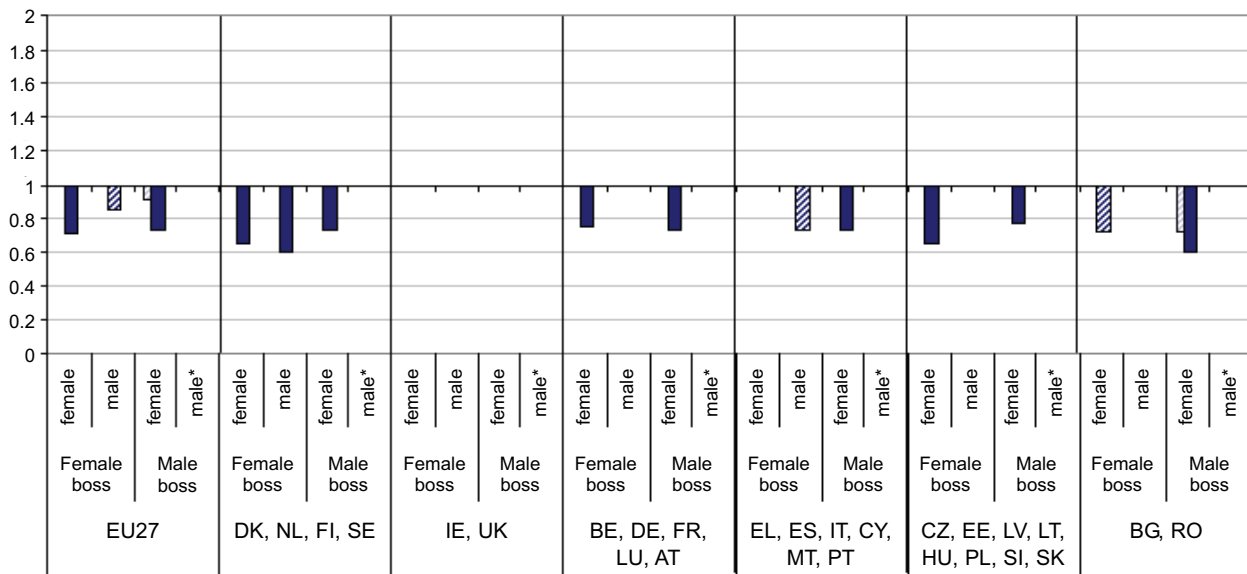
Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

Finally, Figure 18 shows a softer indicator of autonomy at work: whether the worker has the ability to apply his/her own ideas at work. The difference between men and women is once again much more important than the difference between those managed by men and women (there seems to be some effect of the boss's gender in this case only in the Nordic countries, where both men and women managed by women declare that they have less ability to apply their own ideas at work compared to those managed by men).

⁶ The much bigger sample used in the estimation of the model for the EU27 means that some very small effects appear as significant, even if they do not seem significant in any of the individual EU region models.

⁷ The composite measure of autonomy at work is constructed from five different indicators: three of these individual indicators concern the possibility for the worker to choose or change the order of tasks, the methods of work and the speed or rate of work (three indicators of control over the work process); one refers to whether the worker has influence over the choice of working partners; and finally, one concerns the possibility of interrupting work in order to take a short break when the worker wishes to do so. For more details on this composite measure of autonomy, see Parent-Thirion et al. (2007).

Figure 18: Ability to apply own ideas at work



Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.

Source: EWCS (2005).

Thus, in terms of autonomy at work, we did not find any difference between those managed by men and women. It may be that female bosses have a different management style than male bosses, but these differences do not seem to have any significant impact either on the communication/support between subordinates and superiors, nor on the degree of autonomy at work granted to their subordinates, at least as these issues are measured in the European Working Conditions Survey.

Female bosses and the psychological work environment

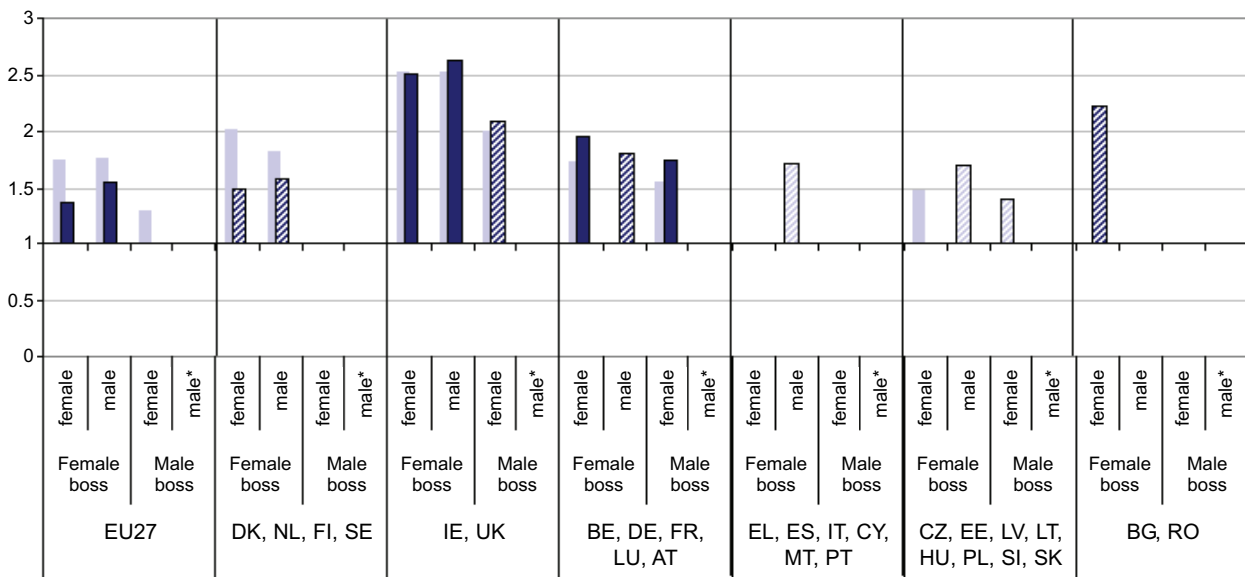
Finally, we will look at the third set of indicators that could, in principle, be affected by the different management styles of male and female bosses. This last set of indicators is most indirectly related to the subject we are studying here, and therefore the results from this section are to be taken with some caution. Whereas it is true that the psychological work environment is likely to be affected by the behaviour and management styles of superiors, there are many other things that are likely to affect the psychological work environment and that we do not and cannot measure here because they are not correctly captured by the controlling factors that we use (sex of the subordinate, occupation and sector). Still, it is of interest to try to check whether there are any significant differences in the perceptions of workers with male and female managers of the degree of intensity of the work effort, suffering from bullying and harassment at work and general job satisfaction.

Figure 12, which is used as an example for explaining how to interpret the graphical representations used in this section, shows the indicator on work intensity.⁸ The coefficients without controls for occupation and sector apparently indicate less perceived intensity for subordinates of female bosses, but when introducing the controls, this difference disappears. Actually, once we control, what seems to happen is that women with a female boss report slightly higher levels of work intensity than the rest. This is only the case in Nordic countries, Eastern European countries and Bulgaria and Romania.

⁸ This indicator of work intensity is based on two survey questions of the 4th EWCS, one dealing with perceived speed of the pace of work, the other with working with very tight deadlines. For a detailed discussion of this indicators, see Parent-Thirion et al. (2007).

Figure 19 shows the indicator measuring the reported levels of bullying and harassment in the workplace (the overall level of workers reporting bullying and harassment in Europe is very low, at around 5%, but the bars represent the odds ratio in a logistic regression model, therefore indicating the higher or lower likelihood for each category of workers of reporting bullying and harassment at the workplace). This is the only case so far in which there seems to be some relationship between the gender of the boss of the worker and the dependent variable. Workers (both male and female) with female bosses are significantly more likely to report bullying and harassment at their workplace at the overall EU27 level and in the Nordic countries, Ireland and the UK and Continental countries (not in Southern or Eastern Europe).

Figure 19: *Bullying or harassment*



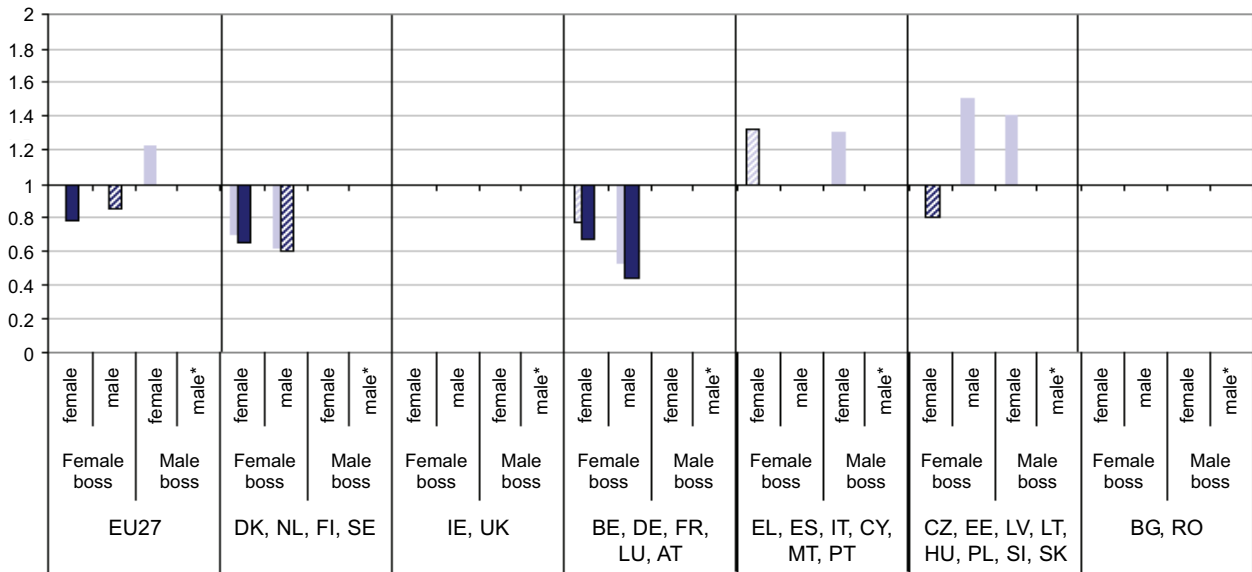
Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.

Source: EWCS (2005).

This result is interesting, and surprising, but rather difficult to explain. Bullying and harassment is not at all necessarily referring to the relationship between subordinate and superior. Unfortunately, the information contained in the EWCS does not allow us to determine who the colleague that bullied the respondents was, so it is impossible to know whether or to what extent this bullying and harassment is actually perpetrated by the superiors. But if it was not the superior, why would those with a female boss be more likely to have been subject to bullying and harassment? It may be that workplaces with a female boss are more likely to report bullying and harassment (for instance, in some cases more ‘progressive’ workplaces tend to report more of these types of problems because of more awareness of them). It is simply impossible to know with the data available, but it is definitely something to be noted for further investigation.

Finally, we will briefly look at satisfaction with working conditions, shown in Figure 20. In this case, for the overall EU figures there seems to be a very small, but statistically significant, difference between those with a male and a female boss, the latter reporting slightly lower levels of satisfaction. As can be seen in the results for individual country groupings, this is only true for Nordic and Continental European countries: in both cases, workers with female bosses tend to report slightly lower levels of job satisfaction than workers with male bosses.

Figure 20: Satisfaction with working conditions



Note: *Male employees with male bosses are the reference category.
Source: EWCS (2005).

Thus, in this third area, which we have called psychological work environment, the results have been more mixed. Regarding the perceived intensity of work, we did not find any difference between those with a male and a female boss, but regarding the reported levels of bullying and harassment and the worker’s satisfaction with his/her working conditions, we did find some evidence (the only one in this entire analysis) of significant differences between those with a male and a female boss. The problem is that because of the type of data available, it is impossible to go much beyond the simple identification of a statistically significant relationship between the gender of someone’s boss and the likelihood that he or she has been subject to bullying and harassment, and a slightly lower degree of job satisfaction. As we mentioned before, this third group of indicators is indirectly related to the boss’s behaviour, and is also sensitive to other issues apart from sex, occupation and sector, which we did not include as controls in the models.

There are still considerably fewer women than men in managerial positions in Europe, even if the findings show that the gender ‘management gap’ is closing at a steady (and slow) pace. Two other significant issues we have identified in this report are a high degree of occupational segregation of female bosses (as much as for female employment in general) and the fact that women in managerial positions tend to be in lower hierarchical levels than men.

Many of the structural barriers women might face on their way to top-level positions have been removed, for example by introducing policies that support gender equality and combat discriminatory practices. This has shifted the focus onto cultural barriers. The most recent literature discussing male and female leaders pays attention to subjective aspects such as stereotypes and gender roles. In this report, we have tried to find evidence of systematic differences in leadership styles between men and women by looking at the impact these styles would have on psychosocial conditions at the workplace as reported by subordinates of male and female bosses.

The analysis has shown that there are no significant differences between male and female bosses for most areas of human relations at the workplace that we have covered (communication with and support from superiors, autonomy at work, work intensity). It seems that it is usually the subordinate’s gender that makes a difference, rather than the boss’s gender, for example, with female workers declaring less communication with the boss and less autonomy at work compared to male workers. The only clear indication that male and female managers might create different working conditions was found at the level of the psychological work environment. The results point out that subordinates of female bosses report slightly higher levels of bullying and harassment and slightly lower levels of job satisfaction than those who are supervised by a man.

Not finding a correlation can prove that a causal relation does not exist (it is very unlikely that we would have missed it), but finding a correlation does not prove that a causal relation exists, as there may be other unobserved factors explaining the correlation. This is what happens with the interesting, but difficult to explain, relationship found between the boss’s gender and bullying and harassment and satisfaction with working conditions. Furthermore, this relationship is not consistent in all the country clusters, which suggests that there are probably some culturally determined factors behind it. This is definitely an issue that requires further research, probably with a methodology that is more sensitive to the cultural construction of gender and managerial models. With the methods used here, we can only point to some potential explanations to this (still to be consistently proven) finding.

We controlled for occupation and sector in the workplace, which reduces some of the variability resulting from the segregation by gender in the labour market. But we did not control by the supervisory level of male and female bosses, which, as we argued earlier, are quite different. Female bosses are more often in low levels of hierarchy, and this may imply that in their positions, the levels of bullying and harassment may be higher, or that they may have less authority to intervene in cases of bullying (see Hurley and Riso, 2007, p. 17).

In addition, the psychological work environment may suffer if the manager is not perceived as suitable for her position. This might happen when gender and manager roles are not perceived as fitting, which according to the literature is more likely to happen for women managers (as a result of the double bind). Researchers who have studied bullying and harassment at the workplace suggest that the manager has a significant impact on the psychological working environment and that bullying often arises in conflict situations and in cases of role conflict and ambiguity (e.g. Ayoko et al., 2003; Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2007).

Overall, our analysis suggests that it is not gender that makes men or women better suited for managerial positions, but rather, subtle conflicts and interactions between stereotypes of men, women and managers make it either easier or more difficult to act successfully as a manager. These stereotypes are culturally constructed and changeable. As it is shown in this report, gender equality in working life has not been reached yet. In Europe, many of the concrete obstacles for women to advance in their career have been successfully removed. A necessary further step is to also acknowledge the possible gender bias when addressing and fulfilling managerial positions, and even when working for a female boss.

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